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ABSTRACT

This guide for parents of students with learning disabilities in Alberta (Canada) presents a variety of strategies parents can use to help their children in grades 1 through 9 become successful learners. Section 1 offers ideas for helping students get and stay organized such as using self-talk to create a positive attitude and organizing materials. Section 2 reviews the reading process. Among many suggestions for developing reading skills are using games to learn sight words, paired reading, and talking about books. Section 3 reviews writing suggestions. They include: using various techniques to get started writing, helping students develop proofreading and editing strategies, and using word processing. Section 4 regarding spelling, covers helping children find the correct spelling of a word, editing spelling in written work, and ways to learn new words. Section 5, regarding mathematics, offers suggestions on practicing number facts, getting math work done, problem solving, preparing for a math test, and using technology. Section 6 reviews the test process. Suggestions for preparing and taking tests include study tips, accommodations for test taking, test writing strategies, and utilizing test results. Section 7 is on projects and covers finding information, alternate ways to show learning, book reports, and technology. Seven appendices include useful forms and the correct order of strokes in letter formation. (Contains 25 references.) (DB)

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Grades 1-9

ED 422 711

The Organization Advantage

The Reading Advantage

The Writing Advantage

The Spelling Advantage

The Mathematics Advantage

The Test Advantage

The Project Advantage

THE Parent ADVANTAGE

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The Learning Disabilities
Association of Alberta

Alberta
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EC 306692

THE Parent ADVANTAGE

helping children become ^{more} successful learners
at home and school

Grades 1-9

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This document is intended for:

Students	
Teachers	
Administrators	
Counsellors	
Parents	✓
General Public	

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Message from the
Minister of Education



The actions outlined in our 12-point plan *First things first...our children* keep the focus where it belongs...on our young children. Specific strategies will help build a strong foundation to give our children the good start they need to read, to learn, and to succeed. For students to learn, we must understand individual students' characteristics, use a variety of instructional approaches, teach students learning strategies, provide appropriate accommodations, and use time and resources flexibly.

Yet, even with the appropriate interventions in place at school, the support of the home offers the student with learning disabilities a vital advantage. Parents who support learning, reinforce strategies taught in the classroom and encourage their children to be responsible and active learners. They make a real difference in the schooling of their children.

This resource encourages families to build on that home advantage. It provides practical strategies for you to use at home with your children in Grades 1-9.

There are no quick fixes for students with learning disabilities. However, with the collaborative efforts of students, parents and teachers, students with learning disabilities can be successful learners. *The Parent Advantage* recognizes the significant role that you play in your children's education. Parents have varying schedules that may affect their levels of involvement in their children's schooling. When time is scarce, you can be a great resource for less time-consuming assistance, such as monitoring homework or reading to your child. *The Parent Advantage* offers encouragement and strategies so you can better help your children become active and successful learners.

Try out these strategies at home and see what works. Not all strategies will work for all children. Please share your successes with your child's teacher and find out what is working at school. Talk to your child's teacher if you have any questions about how to use these strategies. Ensure that your child is getting all the advantages of a collaborative partnership between home and school.

This book is a companion to Alberta Education's teachers' resource *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*. *The Parent Advantage* is a joint project of the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta and Alberta Education. Thank you to the many parents who provided feedback and suggestions during the development of this project.

Gary G. Mar

Gary G. Mar, Q.C.
Minister of Education

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Message from the
**President of the Learning Disabilities
Association of Alberta**

Students with learning disabilities have obstacles between knowledge presented and knowledge absorbed. For these students, the regular learning processes do not work the same way as they do for most students. Therefore, different learning processes are required. If these new processes are to be successful, they must be actively supported by all key participants. Students, parents and teachers must be active and committed participants. When this happens, much can be accomplished.

The Parent Advantage is a handbook that helps students, parents and teachers find new learning processes that work. It includes many strategies for students who want to do better in school. Some strategies may work better for your child than others. It is certain, though, through continued commitment, that these efforts will pay significant dividends. These dividends include greater student success in school, decreased frustration, and a happier outlook for the child.

The development of *The Parent Advantage* involved many people. The LDAA is grateful to all of these, especially the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education, the writers of the handbook — Catherine Walker and Dana Antaya-Moore, members of the Special Education Advisory Committee and all those who participated in the field review.

Jean Mudd
President, Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta

THE Organization ADVANTAGE

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

First things first; students who have difficulty learning often have problems getting (and staying) organized. Students need to be ready to learn at school. There are many ways that you can help your child get organized for learning — both physically and emotionally.

Use Self-talk to Create a Positive Attitude

Self-talk is an important thinking tool.¹ It can help students think and talk positively about themselves and their abilities.

Statements such as "I can't do it!," or "It's too hard!," are self-defeating. Instead, help your child find and use positive statements, such as, "I can do it if I try!," "I am a hard worker!," or "I can use my strategies."

Self-talk can also help students work through tasks step-by-step. Students gain control by breaking tasks into manageable and meaningful parts. For instance, when completing a math problem, a student using self-talk might say, "I've read it over. Now I have to figure out what the question is asking."



¹ From *Smart learning* (p. 4), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

² Picture from *What's the difference?* (p. 95), by E. Barnes et al., 1978, Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press. This work is in the public domain as of December 1985.

Locker Logic

To keep lockers organized, students can put textbooks for morning classes on the bottom shelf and store textbooks for afternoon classes on the top shelf.

Organize Materials

Help your child get organized for the classroom:

- – colour code duotangs — for example, orange for math, green for science — so they are easy to locate
- – look for duotangs and binders with inside storage pockets
- – label all supplies
- – use clear plastic pencil cases so children can see what supplies they have
- – make sure your child has extra supplies at school so class time isn't wasted searching for paper or pencils
- – provide erasable ball point pens, stick-on notes and highlighter pens, as they are valuable organization tools
- – encourage your child to clean his or her desk regularly (at least once a week) and take home anything not needed at school.

SMART Goals

The best goals are SMART. They are

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-based.

For example:

I will read one novel by April 28th

I will keyboard 20 wpm by March 4th

I will be on time for every class this month.

Set Goals for School Success

Setting regular goals to improve work habits helps children become more successful students. Work with your child to develop a list of positive learning behaviours to choose from when setting goals. Your child's list could include the following.

In Class³

- Listen carefully to the teacher.
- Avoid talking to friends during class instructions.
- Practise taking better notes.
- Finish all assignments and make sure they are handed in.
- Participate actively in class discussions.
- Ask the teacher questions when I don't understand.

At Home³

- Organize myself each night for the next day (file papers, check schedule, calendar and weekly goals).

Time Management³

- Use a calendar for recording due dates and tests.
- Break larger assignments into smaller parts and set deadlines for finishing each part.

Study Environment³

- Study in a quiet distraction-free place.
- Organize my desk, drawers and papers.

Put goals in writing and include a way (such as a chart) to keep track of progress.

Goal	My goal is to . . .
Rationale	I chose this goal because . . .
Action Plan	To reach this goal I will . . .
Measurement	How will I know if I am successful?
Evaluation	Did I make my goal?
	What would I do differently in the future?

See Appendix 1, page 52 for a goal planning sheet.

³ From *The Study skills handbook: more than 75 strategies for better learning* (p. 38), by J. Dodge, 1994, New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission.

Taking Notes

By Grade 4 or 5, students need to be able to take organized notes. Often, they don't understand the purpose for writing down information from class lectures and discussion. Share these convincing reasons with your child:⁴

- Your teacher probably covers information in class that isn't in the textbook. If you don't write it down, you won't have it when you need it.
- Class notes are your best record of what happens during class, and your best source of material for test reviews.
- Writing things down reinforces what you hear and helps you remember.
- Taking notes makes you a more active listener.

Other notetaking hints include:

- Write down a date and title for each lesson. (If the teacher doesn't provide a title, make one up.)
- You don't need to write down everything the teacher says, but do write down everything the teacher writes on the board and any questions the teachers asks.
- Underline, circle or star anything the teacher repeats or emphasizes.
- Write one idea per line and skip lines. Leave wide margins so extra ideas can be added later.
- Put question marks by any points you didn't understand — discuss them later with the teacher.

	Snowy Owl	November 2, 1999
appearance:	black and white	
	yellow eyes	
feed:	rodents	
enemies:	polar bears	
	? terns	
habitat:	on ground nests	
	tree tops	
* adaptations:	light bone structure	
	(silent flier)	
	feathers	
	sharp talons	
	large eyes - sharp vision	
	head moves 360°	

⁴ Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (p. 17), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

Class notes become study guides for upcoming tests. Encourage your child to build regular note review into the homework routine. Follow the 3 Rs for reviewing class notes — reread, rewrite and reinforce.⁵

- ①— **Reread** the notes aloud. Repeating the information helps students remember it better so they can use it to answer questions.
- ②— **Rewrite** notes neatly and clearly when there is a scribbled word or an unclear or confusing piece of information.
- ③— **Reinforce** notes. To “reinforce” means to strengthen by adding something. Strengthen class notes by adding important, relevant information from the textbook or handouts. Use a highlighter to spotlight important information. Make sure each section of notes has a title that clearly tells the main idea.

⁵ From *How to study and take tests* (p. 29), by L. Canter, 1989, *Homework Without Tears — Study Skills Series*, Santa Monica, CA: Lee Canter & Associates. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Study Buddies

Students who have difficulty getting organized may benefit by having a study buddy who can be a point of reference. A study buddy should be a successful, friendly student who is willing to let another student compare class notes (not copy them) and is willing to repeat or clarify assignment instructions. Study buddies can also collect extra copies of assignments and handouts for each other if one is absent.

Time Manager

During homework time, children can use a kitchen timer to signal the beginning and end of homework sessions and breaks.

This makes children responsible for monitoring their own breaks.

The Homework Advantage

Establish a Homework Drop-off Spot⁶

Choose a spot at home to put school books and homework assignments each night. The spot should be free of clutter and easy to spot on the way out the door in the morning. Children can make colourful signs to mark their official homework drop-off spot. Develop the habit of always putting school work in the same place each night — this makes it easier to remember to bring it back to school each day.

Schedule a Regular Homework Time

Write down all your family routines and scheduled activities, and then choose a regular homework time that works for your family. Stick to it!

⁶ From *Smart Learning* (p. 48), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Homework Survival Kit⁷

A homework survival kit, containing the supplies required for homework, saves time. Gather up the needed supplies and stash them in a basket or box near the study area:

pencils	scissors	dictionary
eraser	glue	coloured pencils
lined paper	sharpener	scotch tape
stick-on pad	erasable pen	stapler
unlined paper	highlighter pen	

Make a Contract

Some students need the structure and limits of a homework contract outlining what they need to do and the consequences for completing (or not completing) their homework. For example:

Homework Contract	
The homework rule in our family is: <u>Paired reading finished before 8:00 p.m.</u>	
If <u>Everett</u> successfully completes homework (student's name) each day then, <u>for the whole month he earns a trip to</u> <u>the bookstore and one new book - his choice!</u> (positive consequence)	
If homework is NOT completed then, <u>no television before</u> <u>bedtime.</u> (negative consequence)	
To make sure <u>Everett</u> is successful ~~he~~ she will (student's name) <u>set his alarm and start reading at 7:00 p.m.</u> <u>sharp</u>	
<u>Mom</u> will support this homework contract (parent's name) by <u>participating in paired reading with Everett or</u> <u>ensuring that he has a partner.</u>	
<u>Everett</u> (student's signature) <u>Mom</u> (parent's signature) <u>February 1, 1998</u> (date)	

See Appendix 2, page 53 for a homework contract.

⁷ From *Smart learning* (p. 53), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

SECTION

2

THE READING ADVANTAGE

9

THE Reading ADVANTAGE

helping
children
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In this age of expanding information, reading is essential to learning. Reading provides students with new information and ideas, helps them become better writers and communicators, and opens their minds to new worlds and possibilities.

Students with learning difficulties often struggle with reading. They may have difficulty decoding words and/or understanding and remembering what they read. You can use a variety of strategies and approaches to help your child become an accurate and confident reader. This section introduces a variety of ideas from learning the initial sounds of the alphabet to using a textbook efficiently.

The key to becoming a better reader is to READ. Encourage your child to make time every day to read for enjoyment. Make reading a part of your family's daily life. Reading aloud can be a favourite shared activity for all ages.

For the majority of people, silent reading is the most efficient way to read. It tends to be faster than reading aloud and for most people, the faster they read, the less likely their minds are to wander. For some students with learning difficulties, reading silently may not be the best way. Reading aloud may provide essential feedback (through hearing the words) for understanding and remembering what they are reading.

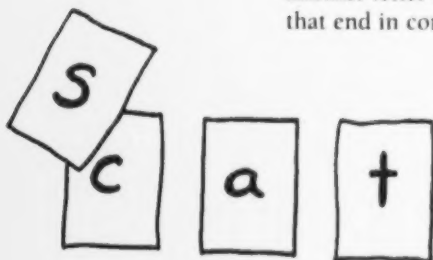
Beginning to Read: Learning About Letters and Sounds

Help young readers learn letters and sounds by providing lots of opportunity for practising and working with the letters of the alphabet.

Alphabet books: In a notebook or scrapbook, write a letter of the alphabet at the top of each page. Encourage children to find pictures of things that start with each letter sound. Glue the pictures in the alphabet book and print the word underneath. Highlight the first letter.

Matching cards: Make up individual cards with single letters of the alphabet on one set and pictures that start with the different letter sounds on a second set. Play a matching game with the pictures and letters.

Build a word: Using individual letter cards or tiles from a game such as Scrabble, build a simple word like "cat." Make a new word by placing another letter card on top of the first letter. Rhyming words or words that end in common letter patterns work best with this activity.



Letter/Sound Patterns

Examples of common letter patterns:

ack	an	et	ent	
back	ban	get	bent	
pack	man	jet	dent	
sack	tan	met	lent	
ish	it	ot	op	un
dish	hit	cot	cop	bun
fish	pit	dot	hop	fun
wish	wit	got	mop	run

Learning New Sight Words

Sight words are those words that children can read from memory, without having to sound them out. Games are a fun way to practise sight words.

Environmental Language

Reading opportunities are not confined to books; all kinds of printed information exists in our everyday environment. Draw your child's attention to times when you are reading for a purpose; e.g., following a recipe, and talk about how important reading is for life. Encourage children to read labels on product packaging, ads and signs along the road. T-shirts and clothing are another source of interesting environmental language. Make scrapbooks of words from favourite and familiar packaging and ads. Talk about the letter sounds in these words. Children are not only practising their reading skills but are learning that words provide much information in our environment.

TIP

When choosing words for these games, ask your child's teacher for suggestions.

Fish

Print each sight word on a file card. Place the word cards upside down in a pile. Take turns drawing cards from the pile. Players keep each word card that they read correctly. When all the cards are picked, the player with the most cards wins.

Concentration

Print single words on file cards, making two cards for each word. Mix the cards and lay them out face down. Each player takes a turn choosing two cards and reading them aloud. If the cards match, and the player can read the word, the player keeps those cards. If the cards are different, they are put back face down and the next player takes a turn. When all the cards have been turned over, the player with the most pairs wins.

Word Race

Set an egg timer or stop watch for one to three minutes. Players read aloud as many sight words as they can within the time limit. Encourage players to set goals for the number of words they can read.

Build a Sentence

Print a sentence on a strip of paper and then cut the sentence into single words. Mix up the words and have children put the sentence back together and read it aloud. Copy sentences from favourite books and build up a collection of sentence strips.

Paired Reading

For more information check your local library for the video, *Paired Reading: Positive Reading Practices* by the Northern Alberta Reading Specialists' Council.

Paired Reading

Paired reading⁸ helps students become more fluent readers and better able to understand and remember what they are reading. It also demonstrates that reading is an important and pleasurable activity for people of all ages. Paired reading is a supportive technique for struggling readers of all ages.

To begin: Find a quiet and comfortable spot. The child holds the book so that both partners can see the words.

To signal the beginning of paired reading, place your finger under the first word of the text. Partners can use a paper marker to mark their place or you can sweep a finger smoothly beneath the words. Begin reading the book together. Partners should try to read in unison.

Solo reading: Decide on a signal; e.g., tapping on the table, for the child to indicate the desire to try reading alone. When the child signals, allow him or her to read solo but continue to follow the print. Quiet encouragement such as "yes" or "uh-huh" tells the child that you are actively reading along.

Helping with mistakes: If the child makes a mistake, point to the word, say it, repeat the word with the child and then continue reading together. If the child struggles with a word, wait at least five seconds before helping. This gives the child an opportunity to try it alone. After this wait time, point to the word, say it, then put a finger back on the text. Repeat the word together and continue to read together until the child signals the desire to read alone again.

Talk about it: As you read the story together, you may want to take breaks to discuss the plot, characters and pictures.



⁸ From *Helping children read: the paired reading handbook* (pp. 56, 59, 61, 62, 63), by R. Morgan, 1986, London, England: Methuen Children's Books (a division of Reed International Books Ltd.). Reproduced with permission.

Read Around



Many students need a strategy for what to do when they come to a word they do not know. When this happens, encourage your child to read around:⁹

- Skip the word and read to the end of the sentence.
- Go back and read the whole sentence again.
- Look at the beginning of the word for letter-sound clues.
- Think: "What word would fit here?"
- Try out the word in the sentence: Does this word *sound* right? Does this word make *sense*? Does this word match the *letter clues*?
- Look at the picture for a clue.
- Ask someone.

Keeping Your Place

Some students have difficulty keeping their place as they read.¹⁰ They can use a ruler, blank file card or clear plastic strip under the line of print to help them keep their eyes and minds focused on the sentence they are reading.

Choosing the Right Book

Cover Information¹¹

Many paperback novels for young readers have a reading level printed on the cover.

- Look for a number on one of the bottom corners of the back cover; for example, RL 2.4. This means, that in the publisher's opinion, this book could be read independently by most students who can read at a mid Grade 2 level.
- IL refers to interest levels — it indicates the grade level that the ideas and story line would most appeal to. For example, IL 3–5 means a book might be of special interest to students in Grades 3–5.

The Five Finger Rule¹²

Encourage your child to use the five finger rule to test whether a book is the right difficulty level for reading alone. Have children read the first page of the book. Whenever they come to a word they don't know or are unsure of, they put up one finger. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, the book is too difficult for them to read on their own right now. The book might still be a good choice for paired reading or for a read-aloud. Keep a list of titles and authors of the more difficult books so that children can come back to them when their reading skills are stronger.

⁹ From *Smart learning* (p. 161), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

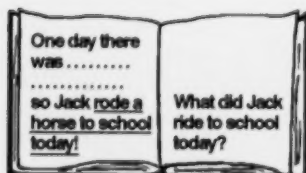
Helping Children Understand What They Read — Asking Good Questions

To help children think about and understand what they are reading, it's important to ask a variety of questions about the material. Good questions encourage different levels of thinking. Avoid questions that require only a "yes-or-no" answer.

Use Taffy Raphael's question-answering strategy to help your child think about what he or she is reading.¹³ Where is the answer?

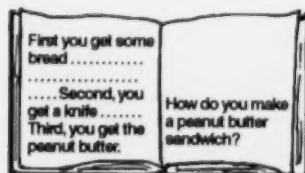
• Right there

The answer is in the story and it is usually easy to find.



• Think and search

Some questions can be answered by searching for the parts and putting them together.



• On my own

Some answers are not found in the text but in your child's head. Your child needs to use his or her own experiences, ideas and opinions to answer the question.

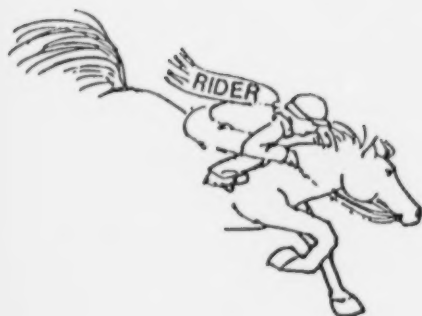


Don't be afraid to ask tough questions and to guide your child through the process of finding answers he or she doesn't know. Model the importance of going back into the text to look for information to support answers.

¹³ From "Teaching question answer relationships, revisited," by T. E. Raphael, 1986, *The Reading Teacher*, 39(6), p. 519. Adapted and reprinted with the permission of the International Reading Association. All rights reserved.

RIDER — A Visualization Strategy

Visualization is a strategy that helps students become actively involved in a story to better understand and remember it. It works best with descriptive writing, such as novels and short stories. Visualizing a story is like running a movie in the mind's eye. The author's text is central to the movie but readers add their own details and elaboration in order to make the story come alive for them. One strategy that uses visualization is **RIDER**.¹⁴ This strategy helps students better understand and enjoy descriptive stories.



Where to Look When Visualizing

Not everyone visualizes with their eyes closed. Encourage children to practise visualizing in whatever way is comfortable for them. This could include looking up at the ceiling or focusing on a distant point in the room.

Read a sentence.

Imagine a picture of it.

Describe the picture to yourself.

Elaborate: clothing, colours, setting.

Repeat steps.

¹⁴ From *SPELT: a strategies program for effective learning and thinking: a teachers' manual* (pp. 160–161), by R. Mulcahy, K. Marlo, D. Peat & J. Andrews, 1987, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Keep Them Reading

Many students become independent readers by Grades 4 or 5. But with increasingly varied leisure opportunities and technology competing for their attention, older students often spend less time reading for pleasure. It is essential to keep children reading, especially less-able readers. To encourage reading for pleasure:

- Tap into children's interests. Look for books that focus on these interests.
- Encourage children to build their own libraries. Invest in a book stamp or book plates to make new books an important part of a personal library.
- Set aside time each day when the television, computer and video games are turned off in your home. Use this time for reading and enjoying books.



RAP — Paraphrasing

RAP is a strategy for reading, understanding and remembering factual information.¹⁵ When children are first learning how to RAP, it is helpful to work through the strategy out loud with a partner.

Read the paragraph.

Ask yourself about what you read.

Does it make sense?

How does it relate to what you already know?

How does it relate to what you've already read?

What is the main point the author is trying to make?

Put it in your own words (paraphrase).

¹⁵ From *SPELT: a strategies program for effective learning and thinking: a teachers' manual* (pp. 145–147), by R. Mulcahy, K. Marfo, D. Peat & J. Andrews, 1987, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Highlight Helpers

Authors of textbooks sometimes highlight the key words by using *italic* or **bold** print.

Pay special attention to these words.¹⁶

The words below pictures may also contain key information.

¹⁶ From *Smart learning* (pp. 6–7), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Highlighting Key Words

Highlighting key words is a strategy for reviewing and studying factual material across the curriculum.¹⁷ It helps students review and organize specific information so that new ideas and concepts are easier to understand and remember.

- Read the paragraph.
- In your mind, identify the main idea. Use this for your title.
- Choose the key words in each sentence. (Usually one to five words per sentence or less than 10 per cent of the text.)
- Ask yourself: "Do each of these words provide an important piece of information about the main topic?"
- If it's okay to write on the page, highlight the words with your highlighter pen. If it's not okay to highlight on the page, make a photocopy or handwritten copy of the information. Use the highlighter pen sparingly. Highlight key words only, not whole phrases or sentences. See the following page for an example.

Native Peoples of Alberta

The **Native** peoples lived in **small communities**. They did not live in one place for long but **moved often** to **search for food**. They lived by **hunting wild animals** and **gathering wild plants**. The animals . . . (Ross, 1994, p. 9)

- Start with your title and organize the highlighted words in a web or list. A simple web for the Native people's paragraph could look like this.



Learning New Vocabulary

Encourage children to keep lists of the new vocabulary they encounter. Often these words are highlighted in the text. Many textbooks have a glossary with definitions. Take time to discuss new words. Look at alternate meanings and uses of each word. Find opportunities to build these words into daily conversations with children.

Reading Textbooks

From Grade 4 on, students need to use textbooks to get new information. *School Power: Strategies for Succeeding in School* offers a systematic approach for reading a textbook chapter.¹⁸ Think of the process as a baseball game.

The Warm-up

- Read the chapter title.
- Read the headings and subheadings.
- Look at the illustrations and read the captions.
- Read the introduction.
- Read the summary and questions.

The Wind-up

Turn each subheading into a question. Start thinking about the information each section will contain.

Example:

Subheading: *Causes of the Riel Rebellion*
 Wind-up question: *What were the causes of the Riel Rebellion?*

The Pitch

Read each chapter section. Keep your wind-up question in mind. Look for the answers.

¹⁸ Excerpted from *School power strategies for succeeding in school* (p. 41), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

The Hit

Answer your wind-up question. If you can't think of an answer, try again. Reread that chapter section again to find the answer to your question and make a hit.

The Run

After you read each chapter section, go back and review your wind-up questions and answers. This will add up to a run — you score!

**The Technological Advantage****Books on Tape**

Books on audiotape can encourage the enjoyment of literature and provide opportunities for supported reading as students read along with a tape. They are available commercially or you can make your own. In addition, Alberta schools can access selected curriculum resources in audiotape format for students who are print-disabled. They are available through the Alberta Education Materials Resource Centre's "Audiotape Service for Students with a Print Disability." Information on availability can be found in the Learning Resources Distributing Centre's (LRDC's) online or Internet Buyer's Guide. The LRDC sells the audiotape curriculum resources on a cost-recovery basis.

Computer Software

There are many reading instruction programs available for home computers. Look for programs that target the specific learning needs and interests of your child. When looking at a software program ask:

- Do the educational goals of this program match my child's current needs?
- Are there a number of skill/instructional levels?
- Can the level of complexity be controlled?
- Is there appropriate feedback when a child makes an error; does the program help children learn from their mistakes?
- Is there opportunity for meaningful interaction for children? (Or do the activities rely on "yes-or-no" items that encourage random guessing?)
- Do children need typing skills to use the program?
- Are the directions clear?

CD-ROM Books

Many popular books are now available on CD-ROM. This technology provides opportunities for students to interact with the text at a variety of levels and ways.

SECTION

3

THE Writing ADVANTAGE

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

Good writers get their ideas across simply and clearly. They think about what they want to communicate, make a plan and follow it through to a logical and satisfying end.

Often, students with learning difficulties have problems with the writing process. These problems can range from poorly developed printing skills to organizing and sequencing ideas. Students who have difficulty writing need simple step-by-step strategies that provide support and structure as they grow more skillful and confident with the written language. Like reading, students need to write (and write and write) to learn to write.

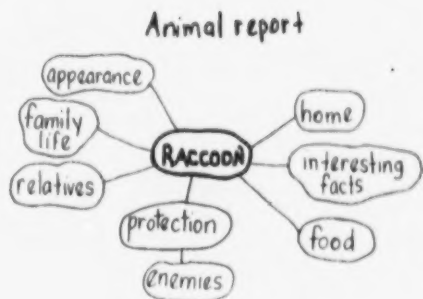
Encourage children to use strong, precise words. They may need assistance in expanding their ideas and providing detail and description. Let children know that good writers work hard to take their readers on adventures, to share experiences, create pictures or help them understand new points of view.

Writing is a process. It involves planning, drafting, revising, proofreading, and then even more drafting, revising and proofreading. Like all writers, students benefit from the feedback of others to help them make their writing the best it can be.

Tips for Getting Started

For some children, getting started is the hardest part of writing. Share these ideas with your children to help them get started:¹⁹

- Draw pictures of your ideas.
- Talk about your ideas.
- Read stories to get ideas for character, colourful language and story structures.
- Read related books to gather background information.
- Brainstorm a list of ideas.
- Make a list of questions.
- Make a list of key words.
- Make an outline.
- Make a web (like the one at right).



¹⁹ From *Smart learning* (p. 24), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

The Writing Process

The process approach to writing looks at what students think and do as they write.²⁰

Stage 1: Planning — think about it:

- choose your topic
- consider who will read it and why
- discuss ideas with others
- read and observe
- gather and record information
- brainstorm a list of words and ideas
- think about what you will say
- plan how you will say it.

Stage 2: Drafting — write it down:

- organize your ideas with:
 - a list of key words
 - an outline
 - a web
- write a first draft:
 - skip lines to leave space for making revisions
 - write on only one side of the page.

²⁰ From *Smart learning* (pp. 22–23), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Stage 3: Revising — make it better

- read what you wrote
- have others read and offer suggestions
- rearrange words or ideas:
 - use arrows, crossouts and other editing symbols to indicate changes
 - use scissors and tape to cut apart and rearrange text
 - add or take out parts
 - replace vague or overused words with more precise, descriptive words
 - add details.

Stage 4: Proofreading — fix mistakes

- make sure all sentences are complete
- check:
 - punctuation
 - capitalization
 - spelling
- look for words used incorrectly
- mark corrections required
- have someone check your work
- recopy it correctly and neatly

Stage 5: Publishing — share it

- read it aloud to a person or group
- bind it in a book
- display it for others to see
- illustrate it.

Paragraph Writing

One strategy for writing an effective paragraph is this outline from the Edmonton Academy.²¹

Topic sentence:

Owning a pet is a great experience
for a kid.

Supporting details:

1. You learn patience. Taking care of a puppy teaches
you all about being patient and responsible.
2. Makes you feel more relaxed. A pet makes you feel
wanted and appreciated. People with pets are less
stressed.
3. You don't feel lonely. Pets are wonderful company. They
don't argue and always act happy to see you.
4. You appreciate nature. Pets, especially dogs, force
you to get outside more and enjoy nature.

Concluding or transition sentence:

I think all kids, especially me, should have
a pet in their life.

²¹ From *Strategies across the curriculum*, by L. Oakes Luchkow, 1995, Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Academy. Reprinted with permission.

Writing Tools²³

Pencils and erasable ball-point pens can be a young writer's best friend. They make editing changes easier.

COPS — A Proofreading Strategy

COPS²² reminds students to proofread their writing to improve it. Jot the letters COPS at the top of the page and have children check off each letter as they go.

Capitalization

- the first word in each sentence
- proper names of people, places and things

Organization

- Are your ideas in the right order?
- Is your writing neat?
- Does it make sense?



Punctuation

- Do you have periods, question marks or exclamation marks for each sentence?

Spelling

- Underline doubtful spellings.
- Does your spelling look correct?

Parents as Editors

Use the following steps to help edit your child's work without redoing it yourself.²⁴ See editing spelling in written work, page 29.

Read it Over

The first step in editing children's work is to encourage them to read over what they have written. They may need to do this aloud to you but they should be encouraged to read it to themselves first. Obvious errors or omissions should be spotted at this stage.

Read it Aloud

Your children may need to hear you read their pieces aloud. This helps them identify errors and omissions that they might have missed when they read it over themselves.

Doubtful Spellings

The next step is to ask children to underline any spellings they are unsure of. (Underlining is more effective than circling.) They can check for correct spellings by using their personal dictionaries or electronic spellcheckers. See page 28 for more on dictionaries.

²² From SPELT: a strategies program for effective learning and thinking: a teachers' manual (pp. 78–80), by R. Mulcahy, K. Marfo, D. Peat & J. Andrews, 1987, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

²³ From *Smart learning* (p. 27), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

COPS

The COPS strategy (previous page) is a useful editing tool. By printing a letter in a margin; e.g., "c" for capital, you alert children to errors in the corresponding line of writing. Letting children find and correct errors helps them develop self-monitoring skills.

COPS: | Snowy Owls

| A Snowy Owl is black and

p | white with yellow eyes

s | It onaly eats rodents

| and meat.

ps | It's enomes are a polar bear, a mob

| of terns, and smaller birds ganging up.

How Much Help is Too Much?

Writing is an interactive process. Most good writers have a support system to help them revise their writing. As parents, you are the young writer's support system at home.²⁵

One of the best indicators of whether the help being provided is beneficial is that children begin independently to use some of the ideas and suggestions they have been given. If you find you are going over the same idea or skill again and again, it may be time to back off a little and put the responsibility back on the child.

Editing Questions

Use the questions below to guide children through the editing process.²⁶ Children can use the questions independently or work through them with an adult.

- ☐ Who will read my work?
- ☐ Will they find it interesting?
- ☐ Will my first sentence grab their attention?
- ☐ Have I started my sentences in a variety of interesting ways?

²⁵ From *Smart learning* (p. 27), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30

- ☐ Have I spelled all the words correctly? (Check words you aren't sure about. Ask a good speller to read and check your spelling for you.)
- ☐ Are periods, commas, question marks, quotation marks and exclamation points in the right place? (Reread to check for yourself; then ask a friend to double check for you.)
- ☐ Have I used correct grammar? (Does it sound right?)
- ☐ Is my printing or handwriting clear and easy to read?
- ☐ Are my ideas in the correct order? (Did I tell the first thing that happened first and the others in sequence as they happened?)
- ☐ Have I used interesting words that the reader will enjoy?
- ☐ Have I overused any words or phrases?
- ☐ Have I used words that are vague and tired out? (Tired out words like "nice" and "cool" don't tell your reader anything.)
- ☐ Have I used examples to help explain my ideas?
- ☐ Have I omitted any important details or information?
- ☐ Have I included any unnecessary details?
- ☐ Is my ending good? Does it really end the story or idea, and tie all the events together?
- ☐ What is special about my writing that my readers will enjoy and remember?

The Neatness Advantage

Neatness counts! Neat work is easier to read — both for the writer and for other readers. Students with learning difficulties often find it difficult to produce neat written work. They may need encouragement and monitoring to help them ensure their writing is as organized, neat and legible as it can possibly be.

Printing and Handwriting

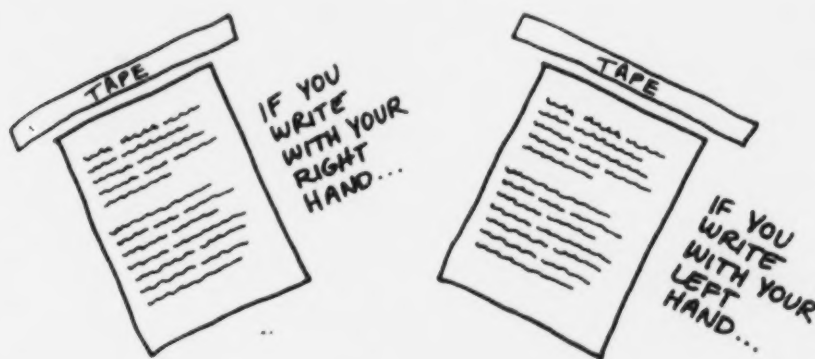
A model of the printed or written alphabet can be a useful reference for young writers. See Appendices 4–7, pages 55–58 for guides to the correct order of strokes for printed and cursive letters and numerals.

Encourage children to use a liner when they are writing on unlined paper. By placing the liner underneath their paper, they will be able to keep their writing straight and evenly spaced.

There is no best way to hold a pencil or to form letters. What is important is a relaxed grip of the pencil and clear, easy-to-read letters.

Good posture is a key to good handwriting. Remind children to sit up straight with both feet flat on the floor. Place the hand that is not being used for writing on the top of the paper to keep it from moving.²⁷

Right-handed children should tilt their papers slightly to the left. Left-handed children should tilt their papers slightly to the right. For children who have trouble remembering which way to slant their papers, try placing a piece of tape, slanting the right way, at the top of their desks. They can use the tape as a guide to help them place their papers the right way.²⁸



Tips for Left-handed Writers²⁹

- Hold pencils three centimetres or more farther back from the tip than right-handed writers. (This will help students see what they've written and they won't smear the paper. Keep wrists straight and elbows close to the body so they don't "hook" their wrists.)
- Slant cursive writing slightly backward instead of trying to slant to the right.

²⁷ Excerpted from *The School survival guide for kids with LD: ways to make learning easier and more fun* (p. 68), by Rhoda Cummings, Ed D. and Gary Fisher, Ph D., ©1991. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

²⁹ From *Smart learning* (p. 32), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.



The Technological Advantage

Using the Computer for Word Processing

The technology of computer word processing has potential for helping less-able writers dramatically improve the quality and quantity of their writing. Word processing makes it easier to add, delete or move text around. A good program can help students identify and correct errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Such programs also help students produce legible and organized pieces of writing.

Computers don't take the place of thinking. Students still need to decide what to write and how to say what they want to say. Computers don't catch errors in word substitutions; e.g., typing "form" for "from" or "you" for "your." Planning and proofreading skills are essential for successful writing, whether using a word processor or not.

Target Keyboarding

To encourage children to develop their keyboarding skills, consider making time on computer games contingent on time spent practising keyboarding skills. For example,

"For every 10 minutes practising keyboarding, you earn 10 minutes of computer game time."

Encourage children to set goals for keyboarding speed and accuracy.

Each year, new products come on the market. In the not-too-distant future, inexpensive laptop computers may be on the desk of every student.

Good keyboarding skills are a real advantage in today's world. Students need systematic instruction in order to master proper fingering and technique. There is a variety of keyboard instructional software that students can work through independently. Many use games and graphics to make the activities fun and motivating. Talk to your child's teacher for suggestions on which software programs would be most helpful for your child.

SECTION

4

THE SPELLING ADVANTAGE

27

THE Spelling ADVANTAGE

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

Correct spelling does matter. Writing that is spelled correctly is easier and faster to read, easier to understand and shows consideration for the reader. Students with learning difficulties are often weak spellers and they need to learn strategies to proofread what they have written in order to make their writing as clear and as free of errors as possible.

Rather than focusing on spelling all words correctly the first time, it's important to help children understand that spelling is part of writing and communicating. It may not be realistic to expect all writers to spell all words correctly the first time. However, all writers can proofread to ensure that in a final draft, spelling errors do not interfere with flow or understanding.

Good spellers generally rely more on visual memory than on knowledge of phonics rules. Phonics is only one tool available to spellers and it has limits for the less-able speller because of the complexity of the English language. Students who may not be able to hear discrete differences in vowel sounds and word syllabication will have difficulty applying phonics rules correctly. Many misspellings are actually students' attempts at applying phonetic rules.

Helping Children Find the Correct Spelling of a Word

When children ask how to spell a specific word, don't tell them to look it up in the dictionary! Finding a word in a regular dictionary can be difficult if you don't know how to spell it. Instead, use this as an opportunity to find out what children know about spelling.

Best Try ³⁰

Before supplying the correct spelling, ask children to give it their best try by writing the word on their own. In some instances, they will be able to spell the word without assistance — much to their surprise. Before they give it their best try, they may not be aware of the skills they have.

If the spelling attempt is incorrect, the best try provides parents an opportunity to see the approximated spelling and comment on the parts of the word that are correct. It may also provide clues about specific spelling difficulties.

When giving the correct spelling, write it down and spell it aloud. Set a good example by using a dictionary to verify a spelling. For example, "I have trouble remembering if it is s-o-c-c-e-r or s-o-c-c-o-r. Let's look it up and check."

Name	P.J.	Date	Nov 6
<i>Best Try</i>	<i>Spelling</i>	<i>Word Bank</i>	
ntilijent	intelligent	☒	
_____	_____	☐	
_____	_____	☐	

Personal Dictionary ³¹

To encourage independence, help children make their own personal dictionaries. Have a page for each letter of the alphabet. Using alphabetical tabs will make locating words easier. Eventually children can use their personal dictionaries before asking for adult assistance. A friendly prompt such as, "Did you check your personal dictionary?" may be necessary.

³⁰ From *Smart learning* (pp. 36-37), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

³¹ Ibid., p. 36.

Editing Spelling in Written Work

After Grade 2, it is important for students to begin to correct most spelling errors in their own work. The eventual goal is to help young writers focus on the printed word and avoid relying on someone else to spot and correct spelling errors.

In the beginning, you may have to provide more direct support. As a first editing step, underline any spelling errors and print the correct spelling in the margin beside the corresponding line. The underlining draws attention to the word but does not unnecessarily mark up the piece of writing. A blue pen or pencil may be friendlier than a red pen. This technique allows children to make their own corrections but provides support for a task that less-able writers might otherwise find overwhelming.

Eventually, you can print a list of corrected spellings on the bottom of the page without marking the errors within the text. This gives children the support they need but lets them be responsible for locating and correcting misspelled words.

Encourage children to put a check beside words they have corrected and record these words in their personal dictionaries. The check mark is a good way to self-monitor and the personal dictionary allows them to edit more accurately and independently on future projects.

How to Learn New Words

Use this six-step method to help children use many of their senses to learn the spelling of a new word.³²



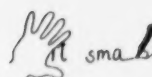
- Look



- Say



- Spell



- Cover / write.



- Think, "Does it look right?"



- Check. (By looking back.)

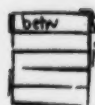
³² From *Smart learning* (p. 39), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Fold-overs³³

Teach children this self-correcting strategy to learn and practise new words.



- Make six accordion folds and copy the word.



- Fold paper over and write the word from memory.



- Check word on top fold. Did you spell it correctly?
- Repeat at least five more times. Even if you get it right, keep practising to make sure that word gets into your spelling memory bank.

Highlight the Parts of the Word You Need to Remember³⁴

Have children pronounce the word clearly and carefully. Use a highlighter pen to mark the letters requiring special attention.

For example: pumpkin February library

Word in a Word³⁵

Teach children to look for little words inside the bigger word. Use a different colour to highlight each little word.

For example: together to get her

Letter Scramble

Have children print the new spelling word on a strip of paper and cut each letter apart. Use the scrambled letters to reassemble the correct spelling.

**Missing Letter Puzzles**

Missing letter puzzles are especially helpful for a group of words that share a common spelling pattern.

For example, to focus on double letters, have students fill in the blanks:

mi _ _ ing le _ _ ers pu _ _ les

³³ From *Smart learning* (p. 40), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

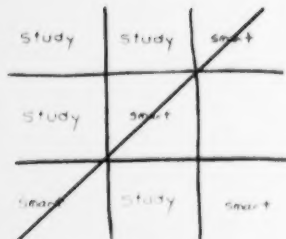
³⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

Pick the Correct Spelling

Encourage children to develop visual skills by asking themselves, "Does this look right?" Print three to five approximate spellings of a word and challenge children to pick out the correct spelling.

For example: hurrt hert hirt hurt

This strategy develops the skills needed to use computer spellcheckers.

**Tic Tac Toe**

Have children practise two new spelling words by using one word for the X and the second word for the O in a game of tic tac toe.

MUST SPELL List³⁶

Encourage children to identify words that they often misspell. Don't label these words as common errors. Call these words the *MUST SPELL* words. Print up to 20 words in alphabetical order on a *MUST SPELL* card. Encourage children to refer to the card when proofreading.

The *MUST SPELL* list might include common words, such as:

about	are	because	been	does
felt	from	girl	heard	here
just	know	like	little	looked
make	next	now	our	said
saw	there	they	their	write

Reversals

A number of young writers occasionally write the letter b for d (or d for b). If this kind of reversal is a recurring problem, use this visual image to check your b's and d's.

bed

For b/d confusion, turn your hands this way:



³⁶ From *Smart learning* (p. 45), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.



The Technological Advantage

Electronic Spellcheckers

Electronic spellcheckers, the size and price of a small calculator, are widely available. A spellchecker may be helpful to students who can identify spelling errors and select the correct spelling from a list of possibilities.

Word Processing

A good computer word processing program offers significant support to weak spellers. Go through the program with your child, identify the common features and discuss what happens with proper names and alternate spellings (such as *color* and *colour*). Allow children to use the spellcheck feature on their own — it is a skill worth mastering.

SECTION

5

THE Mathematics ADVANTAGE

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

The goal of a good math education is to help students become good problem solvers. To do this, students must understand the properties and operations of numbers, and be able to gather and organize a variety of information.

Students with learning difficulties need frameworks for remembering number facts, self-monitoring their own work and applying appropriate strategies to a variety of math-related tasks. Keeping organized and thinking systematically are key to math success. Not all strategies will work for all children.

Getting the Facts

Math gets much easier when students "get the facts."

Here are some tricks for helping children learn and memorize basic math facts.

Addition

Doubles³⁷

Double Look

Listen

$2 + 2$



The Car Fact
2 front tires,
2 back tires
= 4 tires

$3 + 3$



The Bug Fact
3 legs on each side
= 6 legs

$4 + 4$



The Spider Fact
4 legs on each side
= 8 legs

$5 + 5$



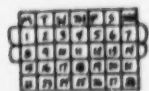
The Fingers Fact
5 fingers on each hand
= 10 fingers

$6 + 6$



The Dice Fact
6 dots on each die
= 12 dots

$7 + 7$



The Two Weeks Fact
7 days in each week
= 14 days

$8 + 8$



The Crayon Fact
8 crayons in each row
= 16 crayons

$9 + 9$



The Double-Nine Dominoes Fact
9 dots on each side
= 18 dots

Doubles Plus One or Two

When adding numbers that are close to a double, such as $3 + 4$ or $9 + 7$, have children think of doubles that will help.

For example, to add $3 + 4$, think of the double 3: $3 + 3 = 6$; $6 + 1 = 7$

Counting On

When adding two numbers less than 20, start at the bigger number and count up to the smaller number.

For example, to add $7 + 2$, think "7 is the bigger number, so start *counting on* at 7. So, 7 (count up two numbers) 8, 9. So, $7 + 2 = 9$."

Know One, Know the Other

(The order of the numbers in addition and multiplication facts does not change the answer; this is also called the commutative property.)

If children know one fact, such as $2 + 3 = 5$, then they also know $3 + 2 = 5$.

Subtraction

Counting Back

To subtract 1, 2 or 3 from a number, count backwards from the bigger number.

For example, to subtract $8 - 2$ think, "8 (count back two) 7, 6. So $8 - 2 = 6$."

Think Addition

To find the answers to subtraction facts children do not know, have them turn the subtraction fact into an addition fact and find the missing part.

For example, turn $11 - 7$ into an addition fact, $7 + ? = 11$. Figure out the missing part.

³⁷ Excerpted from *The School survival guide for kids with LD: ways to make learning easier and more fun* (p. 89), by Rhoda Cummings, Ed D. and Gary Fisher, Ph.D., ©1991. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

Multiplication

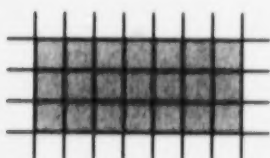
Use the commutative property. If children know $2 \times 9 = 18$, then they also know $9 \times 2 = 18$.

- To multiply by 0 think: $0 \times \text{any number} = 0$
- To multiply by 1 think: $1 \times \text{any number} = \text{that number}$
- To multiply by 2 think: doubles
- To multiply by 3 think: doubles plus the number
(3×2 think: $2 \times 2 = 4$; $4 + 2 = 6$)
- To multiply by 4 think: doubles plus doubles
- To multiply by 5 think: count by 5s
- To multiply by 6 think: count by 5s then add the number
(6×7 think: $5 \times 7 = 35$; $35 + 7 = 42$)
- To multiply by 7 think: of the facts you already know — if you know 3×7 then you know 7×3 ;
memorize $7 \times 7 = 49$; $7 \times 8 = 56$
- To multiply by 8 think: if you know $4 \times 8 = 32$, then $8 \times 4 = 32$
memorize $8 \times 8 = 64$
- To multiply by 9 think: if you know $4 \times 9 = 36$, then $9 \times 4 = 36$
also the numbers in the products in the 9 times table
all add up to 9; e.g.,
 $9 \times 2 = 18$ ($1 + 8 = 9$)
 $9 \times 4 = 36$ ($3 + 6 = 9$)
- To multiply by 10 think: add a 0 to the other number; e.g., $10 \times 6 = 60$

Multiplication/Division

Visualizing Multiplication/Division Facts

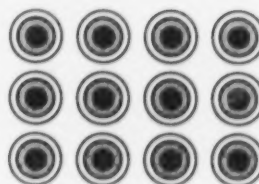
To help children visualize what the basic multiplication/division facts mean, have them colour an array (display) on graph paper, or build them with stamps, buttons, blocks, etc., and write the matching number sentences below the array.



$$\begin{aligned} 3 \times 7 &= 21 \\ 7 \times 3 &= 21 \\ 21 \div 3 &= 7 \\ 21 \div 7 &= 3 \end{aligned}$$



$$\begin{aligned} 4 \times 2 &= 8 \\ 2 \times 4 &= 8 \\ 8 \div 4 &= 2 \\ 8 \div 2 &= 4 \end{aligned}$$



$$\begin{aligned} 3 \times 4 &= 12 \\ 4 \times 3 &= 12 \\ 12 \div 3 &= 4 \\ 12 \div 4 &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

Practising Facts

Addition Challenge

Two players each have a deck of cards. Remove the face cards. Both players turn over two cards at the same time and call out the sum of their two cards. The player with the largest correct answer gets one point. The game continues until one player reaches a predetermined goal, say 25. This game can also be played with 10 or 12-sided dice.

Multiplication Race to 1000

Using a deck of playing cards, each player draws two cards and multiplies the two numbers together. Check the answer with a calculator. If the answer is correct, record it on a race card, like the one pictured at left. Players take turns, adding their answers up as they go. The first player to reach 1000, wins.

Race to 1000 Card

0			
			1000

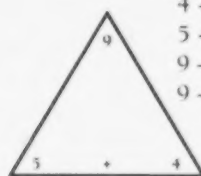
This game can also be played with 10 or 12-sided dice.

Flash Cards

Make or buy flash cards. Use them independently, in races, or for drill with a partner.

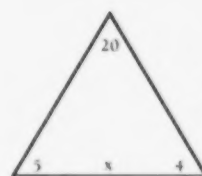
For an added challenge, use triangular flash cards to help children become familiar with the three numbers involved in each math fact. These cards can be used for addition and subtraction or with multiplication and division facts. Use triangles with equal sides approximately 10 cm x 10 cm, so that when held at arm's length, the child can see all three numbers in the pattern.

For example: **Addition**



$$\begin{aligned} 4 + 5 &= 9 \\ 5 + 4 &= 9 \\ 9 - 4 &= 5 \\ 9 - 5 &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

Multiplication



$$\begin{aligned} 4 \times 5 &= 20 \\ 5 \times 4 &= 20 \\ 20 \div 5 &= 4 \\ 20 \div 4 &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

Sing Out

Commercial audiotapes are available with songs and raps that teach math facts.

		4			7
7	3		5		
	7		1	2	

Getting Your Math Work Done

- Highlight key words in the directions (maximum of five words per sentence).
- Use graph paper to keep the numbers lined up.

To Double Check Math Facts:

- add from the bottom up to check addition
- use addition to check subtraction
- flip the numbers and re-multiply to check multiplication
- use multiplication to check division

- If a child has difficulty copying, you can help by photocopying the textbook page or by copying the questions into the math notebook so children can focus on the actual math problem.
- Teach this *Smart Learning* strategy to children who get stuck:³⁸
 - Read the directions two more times.
 - Highlight key words.
 - Look at an example and use self-talk to work through the steps in your mind.
 - Copy the sample question and work it through on your own.
 - Give yourself a fresh start. Write your question on another piece of paper and then try to work it through from the beginning.
 - Mark the question with a star (*) and come back to it later.
- Encourage children to initial the bottom of their workbooks or pages to indicate that they have double-checked their work.

³⁸ From *Smart learning* (p. 5), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Problem Solving

Students need a variety of strategies for problem solving in math. Make a reference list of possibilities including:

- make a number sentence; e.g., $40 - 6 = 34$
- make a problem simpler
- use what you know
- look for a pattern
- make an organized list or table
- make a diagram
- act it out
- use logical reasoning
- guess and check.

Students should read problems over two or three times, highlight key words and then cross out irrelevant information.

Encourage children to think aloud as they work through the problem-solving steps:

- What do I want to know?
(What is the problem asking me to find out?)
- What strategies will I use?
(I may need to use more than one strategy if the problem has several steps.)
- Solve the problem.
(Show my work.)
- Solution
(Write my answer in a complete sentence.)

Getting Ready for a Math Test

Students need to know that they *can* study for a math test. Encourage your child to use math textbooks and notebooks to study.

Use the Textbook to:³⁹

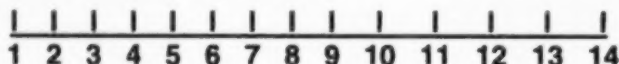
- ☐ Make a list of skills covered in the unit. The table of contents may be helpful.
- ☐ Work through the examples on each page. Talk through each step in your head.
- ☐ Find a sample question for each skill. Do each question on your own and then check your answers.
- ☐ Do the unit check-up or unit review. The test is often similar.

Use the Math Notebook to:³⁹

- ☐ Highlight hints and strategies.
- ☐ Look at the mistakes you made on daily assignments. Is there a pattern?
- ☐ Cover a row of answers with a blank sheet of paper. Work through each question, then check your answers.
- ☐ Pick two questions from each page. Recopy and do them on your own. Check your answers.
- ☐ Practise by finishing any incomplete questions.

Math Tools

If a ruler has both metric and inches markings, cover the inches markings with coloured tape. This will prevent confusion when measuring. (Only the metric system is used in school.) Rulers can also be used as number lines for addition and subtraction facts.



³⁹ From *Smart learning* (p. 11), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

The Technological Advantage

Calculators

Electronic calculators are inexpensive, accurate and may be used in many testing situations including the Alberta Education Achievement Tests. Scientific calculators are required for students writing the Grade 9 Mathematics Achievement Test.



Look for a calculator with an easy-to-read screen and large buttons to help reduce errors. Solar-powered models mean batteries never run out. Some students may need printout calculators so they can monitor the accuracy of their entries.

Calculators are a valuable tool but are only as accurate as the person using them. Look for common errors such as clearing after entering each number in an addition equation. Make sure your child knows how to use the calculator correctly.

SECTION

6

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

THE Test ADVANTAGE

Tests are an opportunity to demonstrate learning. Preparing for a test helps students transfer and integrate new concepts and skills. Tests are a reality check. They give students, teachers and parents information about how a student is learning and demonstrate what the student can do independently.

Show What You Know

The first step in getting ready for a test is for students to ask themselves, "What do I need to know?" and "How can I show what I know?"

Review class notes and make a list of special words and terms. Write down important concepts that might need to be compared or explained. Make another list of possible diagrams or illustrations. All of this information can be organized on a one-page study guide similar to the one on the next page.

Topic TREES & FORESTSMy test will be on Monday, November 13To review for this test I should refer to my folder**A. DEFINITIONS/TERMS***(Know what these words mean and be able to use them)*

- habitat
- photosynthesis
- nutrient cycle
- producer / consumer / decomposer
- food web

B. CLASSIFY*(Be able to compare and contrast - know the similarities and differences)*

- deciduous or coniferous
- producer or consumer or decomposer
- identify leaves ^{shapes} / _{arrangements}

C. EXPLAIN*("What if" "Tell why" "Give reasons")*

- what tree rings (cookies) tell about growth
- how plants make food
- how oxygen is exchanged

D. DRAW (and label)**DEMONSTRATE**

- food web
- oxygen exchange
- use keys to identify trees

40

See Appendix 3, page 54 for a study guide.

Short and Often

Don't wait until the last minute to review for a test. Frequent short study periods are more efficient than cramming in one long study session.

Overlearn

Keep studying something even after you know it. Overlearning is especially useful if you get nervous during a test.

Read Aloud

Reading aloud new information helps some students remember ideas faster and more efficiently.

⁴⁰ From *Smart learning* (pp. 8-9), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Ten Study Tricks

Have children choose one or two of these study tricks when preparing for a test or learning new information.⁴¹

- **Highlight.** Read over notes. Highlight key words. (See pages 16–17.)
- **Make webs.** Make a web for individual topics. (See page 17.)
- **Use flash cards.** Make up flash cards for special words and drawings.
- **Ask questions.** Make up questions for each topic. Ask each of your questions at least three different ways.
- **Play Jeopardy.** Use key words as answers and make up a question for each (as they do on the television game show *Jeopardy!*).
- **Use activity sheets.** Review all the activity sheets in the unit. Cover up the answers and try them again. Change one thing in the activity sheet and complete it.
- **Make a cloze exercise.** Make up fill-in-the-blank statements.
- **Use drawings.** Practise the drawings from the unit. Label all the parts and explain the diagram.
- **Be a teacher.** Teach someone else the new information.
- **Make practice tests.**

⁴¹ From *Smart learning* (p. 10), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Special Accommodations for Test Taking

To do their best, some students may need special accommodations in the classroom. If special provisions are needed for test taking in the classroom, encourage children to approach their teachers before the test. Help them practise what they will say. Encourage them to state the problem simply and clearly, and offer the teacher a solution. Examples follow:

I may need some additional time to show all that I know on this test.

I am willing to stay after class or through the lunch hour.

I have some difficulty with spelling but I will do my best.

I hope spelling errors don't interfere with my mark on this test.

Can I ask if I can't read some of the words on the test?

Can I ask if I am unsure of what a direction means?

You can help your child identify what kinds of accommodations will help. Some provisions to consider are:

- Ask the teacher to go over the directions for each part of the test to ensure that individual students understand what they are being asked to do.
- A teacher could scan a completed test and encourage students to complete any questions left blank.
- If a written answer is unclear (because of spelling or grammatical errors), a teacher might ask a student to orally explain an answer.
- Some teachers may be willing to give tests orally.
- In some cases, an adult may even be available to write the answers as the student dictates them.

Alberta Education Achievement Tests

Schools may request special provisions for students with learning disabilities or physical disabilities who are writing the Alberta Education Achievement Tests. Your child's school will be aware of the requirements and the procedures for applying for special provisions. For more information about special provisions, talk to your child's teacher or check Alberta Education's website (<http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca/studenteval/>).

The Night Before the Test

Encourage children to get a good night's sleep before an important test. In the morning, have them eat a healthy breakfast. Before leaving home, encourage children to make sure they have everything they need for the test. This could include: pencils, eraser, erasable ball-point pen, calculator and study notes.

On the way to school, children can use positive self-talk such as "I'm ready, I'll do my best."⁴²

Test Writing Strategies

Splashdown⁴³

Just before starting the test, encourage children to do a "splashdown" on the back of the test paper. By taking two minutes to jot down all the key words, memory triggers, dates, names, formulas and special information that they can remember, they give themselves memory triggers that they can use later.

⁴² Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (p. 75), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 76.

SCORER⁴⁴ (A Test Taking Strategy)

Encourage children to use test-taking strategies. The SCORER strategy helps children systematically approach test taking.

**Schedule your time.**

Look over the whole test. Decide how much time you have for each question. Use all the time given.

Clue words give you help.

Sometimes one question has part of an answer to another question.

Omit the difficult questions.

Stay calm. Mark questions you don't know with a star. Keep going and come back to them when you have finished the other questions. Read difficult questions through three times. Try not to leave any blanks. If you don't know the answer make a best guess.

Read directions carefully.

Highlight key direction words.

Estimate your answers.

Make a guess and ask yourself, "Does this make sense?" Check out the value of the question. If it is worth three points make sure you have three points in your answer.

Review your work.

Read over your answers three times. Ask — "Is this what I want to say? Does it make sense? Can someone else read my answers?"

⁴⁴ From *Exceptions: a handbook of inclusion activities* (pp. 109–110), by D. A. Murphy et al., 1988–1994 (second edition), Longmont, CO: Sopris West. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

The Anxiety Advantage

A little anxiety can be an advantage — it can focus energy and sharpen thinking.⁴⁵

However, too much anxiety can be counter-productive. The best defense is to be prepared. Most children find that the more prepared for tests they are, the less anxious they will feel.

Advise children to take a brief relaxation break if they start getting anxious. Practise these three simple steps:

- Close your eyes.
- Breathe deeply and slowly.
- Think about relaxing your hands.

Remind children to ignore other students who finish the test before them. It's a myth that top students finish first. If children finish a test early, they can use the time to check answers and read over the directions.

⁴⁵ Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (p. 76), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radenich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

What to do When the Test Comes Back

When the teacher hands back the test, encourage your child to bring the test home and use it to analyze errors. Try to figure out what happened. Was it a careless mistake? Were the directions misunderstood? Be sure to point out what was done right to reinforce good work habits and build confidence.

Find out the right answer for each question missed. Have children write it on the test paper and turn it into a study tool for next time. Keep a file of old tests. They can help predict the kinds of questions a teacher might ask.⁴⁶



The Technological Advantage

Tape recorders can help children review for tests. Use them to tape questions and rehearse answers. During tests, calculators, electronic spellcheckers and word processors may be helpful to some children.

⁴⁶ Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (p. 79), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN, 1-800-733-7323. All rights reserved.

SECTION

7

THE Project ADVANTAGE

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

"Mom! Dad! I have a project due tomorrow! I need your help!" Does this sound familiar? Doing a project is an excellent way for children to demonstrate their knowledge, extend their learning and create a context for new skills and concepts. For children with learning difficulties, projects may have an advantage over written reports or tests. They usually require less writing and they may capitalize on creativity and divergent thinking. However, they also require organization and planning.

Children should set out timelines for completing projects. They need to set up a long-range plan which breaks the project down into steps and assigns each step a deadline. Monitoring is essential — that's where parents come in. Work with your child to design a chart that outlines the plan and has a spot for recording parents' signatures as each step is completed.

Quality control is an important part of the project advantage. This means deciding what's important — what needs to be in the project, and what is extra and can be left out. In addition, quality control means looking at the project and deciding where there is room for improvement. For example, a child who has difficulty printing neatly may decide to use a word processor.

If the teacher provides criteria outlining expectations, go through the criteria at the beginning of the project, refer to them throughout the project, and review them again once the project is completed. Keep the criteria on file. They will give you ideas for future projects.

Finding the Information

Doing a project well requires research. Use a minimum of three different sources for a research project. Potential sources include:

- books
- experts
- the Internet
- television programs
- encyclopedias
- CD-ROM encyclopedias
- magazines
- videos.

Children may need your assistance to use these sources to locate key information and record it. The strategies found in *The Reading Advantage* (pages 9–18) help children use textbooks for research information.

Encourage children to organize the information they gather. Keep notes from individual sources on separate sheets of paper or file cards and keep everything together in a file folder. Add any pictures that may be included in the project. Keep a list of sources so they can be referenced in the bibliography.

Alternate Ways to Show Learning

Here are just four examples of creative ways that children can demonstrate what they know through projects. These projects can be adapted for a variety of topics and assignments.

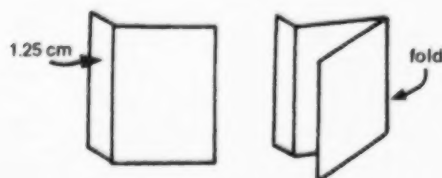
Fan-fold Display⁴⁷

Fan-fold displays are creative and colourful ways to present information for a research project or book report. Follow the directions below for assembling the fan-fold display and then encourage children to use their own planning, imagination and creativity to present information on the display. Remember, any visual project presentation should include both text and pictures. Experiment with different ways of laying the information out on the fan-fold and then glue on the work. Use a ruler to keep everything straight.

Materials: 3 sheets of 22.5 cm x 30 cm construction paper or light bristol board.

To begin: Fold a 1.25 cm edge along one side of each sheet of paper. Then fold each of the sheets in half.

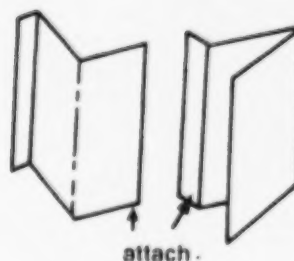
①



⁴⁷ From *Writing* (3–4) (p. 106).
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23740 Hawthorne Boulevard,
Torrance, CA, 90505. Adapted and
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2

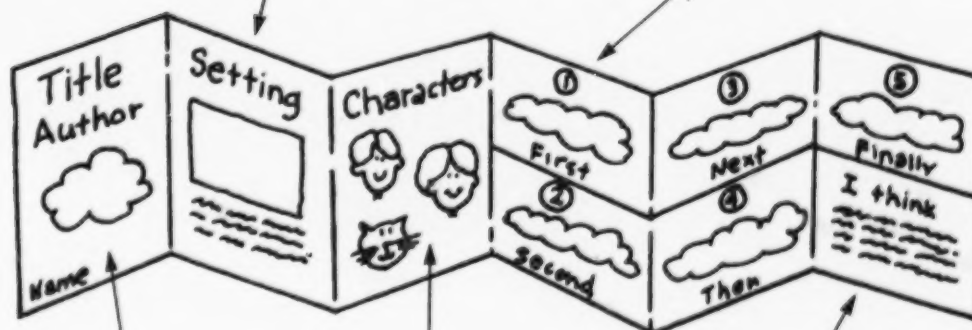
Attach the three sheets together by gluing the folded edge of one sheet to the straight edge of the next.



Draw, label and describe the setting (where and when the story takes place).

Draw five pictures about the book in the numbered spaces. Label them First, Second, Next, Then and Finally.

3



Write the title, author and your name. Add a picture.

Draw and label the main characters in the story.

Write your opinion of the book. Tell why you would or would not recommend it to others.

Brochures

Designing a brochure is another interesting way to present information. A brochure could be used to describe a country and its people; e.g., Japan, or to discuss interesting technology; e.g., simple machines.

To make a brochure, fold a sheet of paper in half or thirds. Encourage children to sketch a plan of how they want to present the information.

Have them design an eye-catching and informative cover page for the brochure. The goal is to capture readers' attention and to make them want to open the brochure to find out more. Within the brochure, include both writing and pictures. Think carefully about the concepts or facts to illustrate. Make illustrations large enough to be easily understood. Give each illustration a caption to help the reader make connections back to the text. Experiment with different ways of displaying the material in the brochure.

Mind Maps

Another way to present information for a project is a mind map. Mind maps give the audience a visual picture (using words, shapes and colours) of a topic or idea.

To begin, have children research the topic and organize information into categories or groupings.

Start the mind map by writing the topic in the centre of the page and then drawing a shape around it. Sub-topics can be arranged around the centre. Write the information in point form or key words — not full sentences. Use colours, symbols and small line drawings to help communicate information.

Encourage children to talk through their mind maps and ask themselves if any information is missing. They should also ask another person to read through the mind map to see if it has the needed information. This feedback is valuable in helping children make the changes required to improve their maps and their presentations.



Oral Presentations

Public speaking can be challenging for anyone, but Debbie Hamilton's CHECK strategy can help children prepare for oral presentations.⁴⁸

Check the audience. Is everyone ready to listen?

Have eye contact with the audience.

Express. Use your voice and body language to communicate.

Clear. Make sure you speak so that everyone can understand your words.

Keen to be heard. Show you're interested in what you're saying; be enthusiastic.

Parents and siblings can be a friendly and supportive audience for practising oral reports. Use the CHECK strategy as a guide for giving children feedback about what they are doing well and where they need to improve.

Oral presentations may also accompany any of the project suggestions given here. Webs (see page 17) or more detailed mind maps (see page 48) are also good ways to organize information for presentations.

Book Reports

Often students are required to complete several book reports in a school year. This may be a struggle for students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing. Any of the three projects listed previously may be used to present book reports. However, if a more structured, written report is expected, have children try the following plans adapted from *School Power: Strategies for Succeeding in School*.

Book Report — Fiction⁴⁹

I. Introduction

- a. Title of the book
- b. Author
- c. Type of book; e.g., mystery, adventure, fantasy
- d. Setting of the book
 - Time
 - Place
- e. Why I chose this book

⁴⁸ From *SPELT: a strategies program for effective learning and thinking: a teachers' manual* (pp. 128, 131), by R. Mulcahy, K. Marfo, D. Peat & J. Andrews, 1987, Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

⁴⁹ Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (pp. 105–106), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-735-7323. All rights reserved.

II. Characters

- a. Main character (name and description)
- b. Other important characters (names and descriptions)
- c. How the character is like me or different from me

III. Summary of the plot

IV. Critique

- a. The part I liked best was
- b. The part I liked least was
- c. Why I would/would not recommend this book to another reader

Book Report — Non-fiction⁵⁰

I. Introduction

- a. Title of the book
- b. Author
- c. Subject of the book
- d. Why I read this book

II. Summary of the book

III. New and interesting facts I learned from reading this book

IV. Critique

- a. The part I liked best was
- b. The part I liked least was
- c. Why I would/would not recommend this book to someone else

**The Technological Advantage**

Tape recorders and video cameras can be used for parts of presentations. Students can also record rehearsals of their presentations and listen to or watch tapes to see what they need to change.

Projects provide wonderful opportunities for students to explore and learn how to use software programs such as *Power Point*, *Hyperstudio* and *ClarisWorks*.

⁵⁰ Excerpted from *School power: strategies for succeeding in school* (pp. 107-108), by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Marguerite Radencich, Ph.D., ©1992. Used with permission from Free Spirit Publishing, Minneapolis, MN; 1-800-675-7323. All rights reserved.



Appendices

helping
children
become
more
successful
learners
at
home
and
school

Appendix I

Goal Planning Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

(Goal) My goal is to _____

(Rationale) I chose this goal because _____

(Action plan) To reach this goal I will _____

(Measurement) How will I know if I am successful?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week #1					
Week #2					

(Evaluation) Did I make my goal? _____

What would I do differently in the future? _____

Appendix 2⁵¹

Homework Contract

The homework rule in our family is:

If _____ successfully completes homework
 (student's name)

each day then, _____

 (positive consequence)

If homework is NOT completed then, _____

 (negative consequence)

To make sure _____ is successful he/she will
 (student's name)

_____ will support this homework contract
 (parent's name)

by _____

_____ (student's signature)

_____ (parent's signature)

_____ (date)

⁵¹ From *Smart learning* (p. 52), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Appendix 3⁵²**Study Organizer**

A. DEFINITIONS/TERMS (Know what these words mean and be able to use them.)

B. CLASSIFY (Be able to compare and contrast — know the similarities and differences.)

C. EXPLAIN (“What if . . .” “Tell why . . .” “Give reasons . . .”)

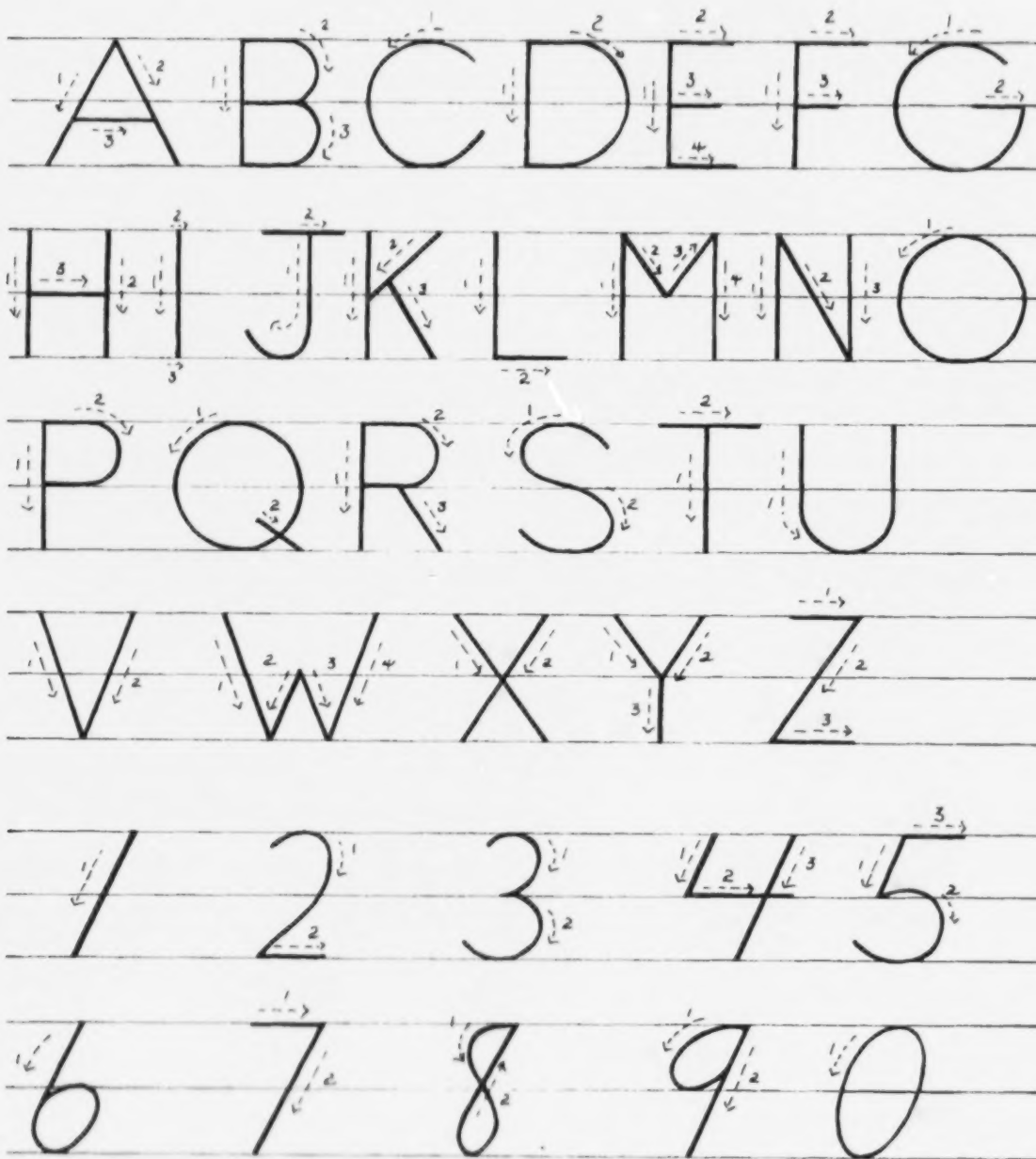
D. DRAW (and label)

DEMONSTRATE

⁵² From *Smart learning* (p. 8), by D. Antaya-Moore & C. M. Walker, 1996, Edmonton, AB: Smart Learning. Adapted and reprinted with permission.

Appendix 4

Correct Order of Strokes Printed Capital Letters and Numerals³³



³³ From *Elementary language arts curriculum guide 1978* (p. 61), by Alberta Education, 1978, Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix 5

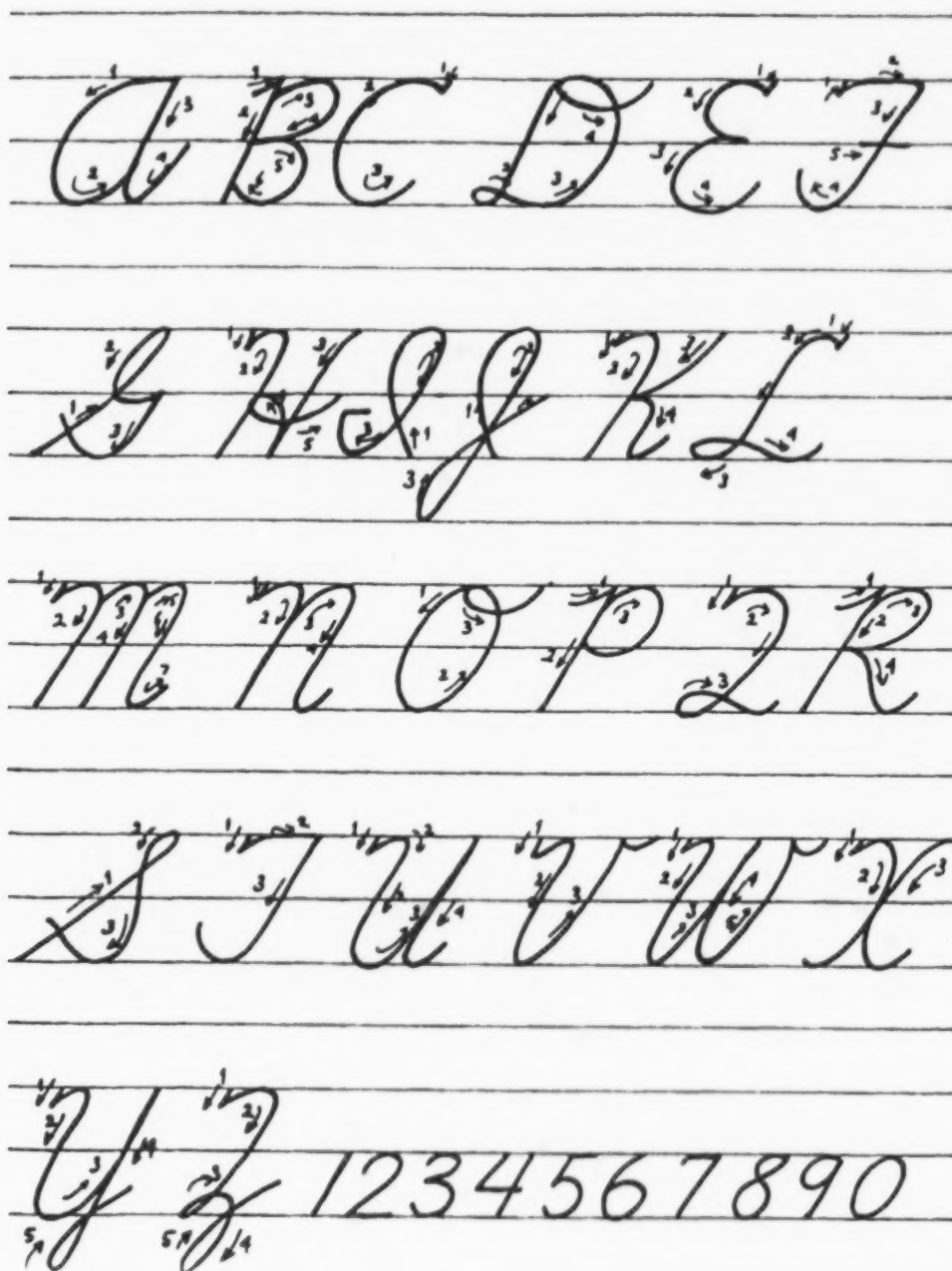
Correct Order of Strokes Printed Lower Case Letters⁵⁴



⁵⁴ From *Elementary language arts curriculum guide 1978* (p. 62), by Alberta Education, 1978, Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Reprinted with permission.

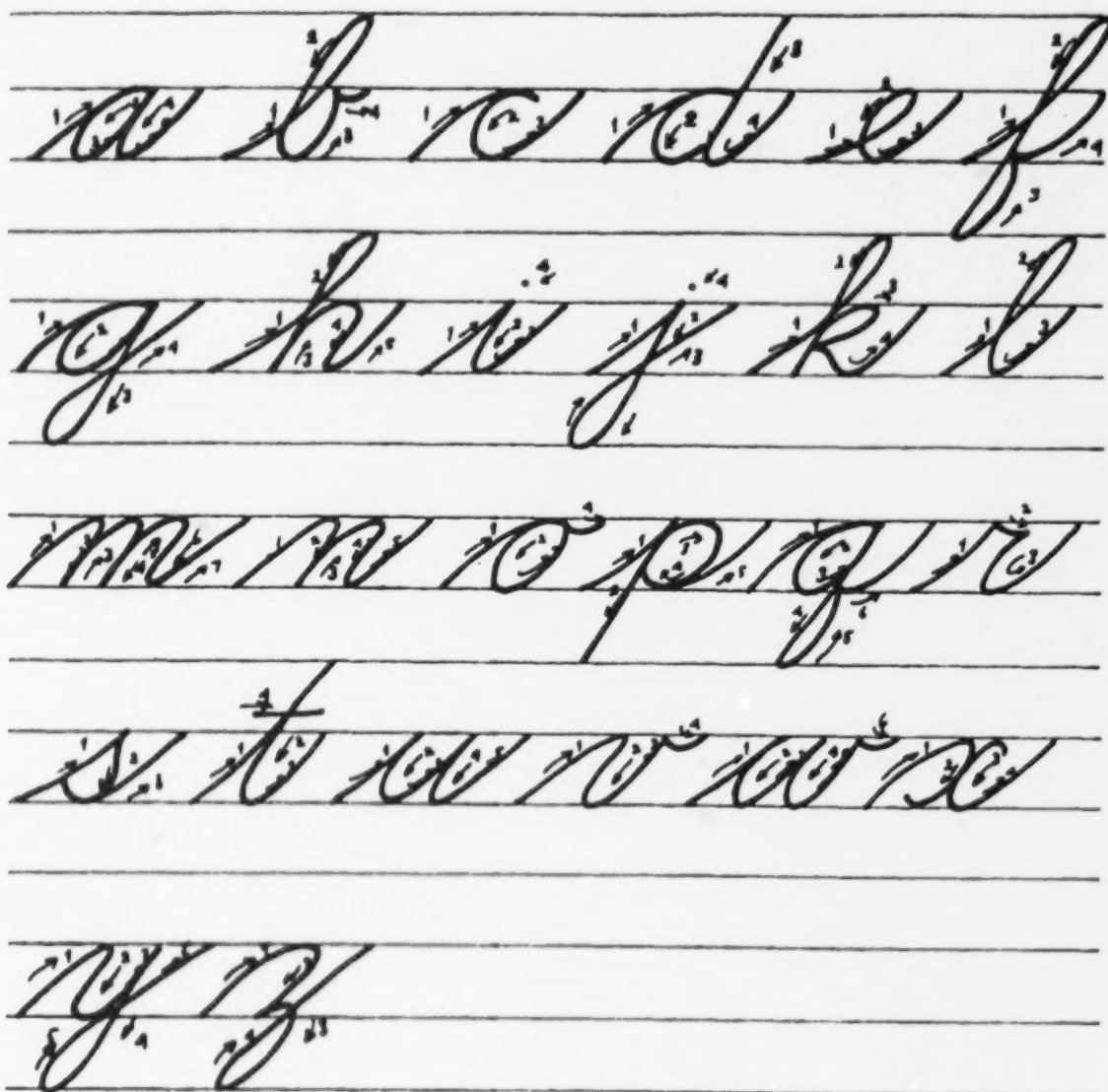
Appendix 6

Correct Order of Strokes Cursive Capital Letters and Numerals³⁵



³⁵ From Elementary language arts curriculum guide 1976 (p. 11), by Alberta Education, 1976, Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix 7

Correct Order of Strokes
Cursive Lower Case Letters⁵⁶

⁵⁶ From Elementary language arts curriculum guide 1976 (p. 9), by Alberta Education, 1976, Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Reprinted with permission.



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helping
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Note: The Alberta Education manual *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities* contains a comprehensive bibliography and a list of materials for working with students with learning disabilities.

